



The Newsletter of the African Burial Ground Project

UPDATE

Winter 2001

Vol. 3 No. 5

Update, the newsletter of the African Burial Ground Project, is published by the Office of Public Education and Interpretation of the African Burial Ground (OPEI), at 6 World Trade Ctr., U.S. Custom House, Rm. 239, New York, NY 10048. Tel. (212) 432-5707, Fax (212) 432-5920. Please send all e-mail inquiries to our address: nyabg@world-net.att.net. *Update* provides current information about New York City's African Burial Ground and its historical context. This publication is made possible with funds provided by the U.S. General Services Administration under contract number 2PCB-CM-97-0154.

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and more!

New York African Burial Ground Project Celebrates African American History Month 2001

Sherrill D. Wilson, Ph.D.



The Henry Warner Jazz Trio

Photo credit: OPEI Staff

February 2001 marks the 75th year of African American celebrations of our history and contributions, by way of Carter G. Woodson's Black History Week and Black History Month tributes. Woodson, known as the "Father of Black History," was a founding member of the Association for the Study of African-American Life and History in 1915, and editor of the Journal of "Negro" History (1916).

Woodson began the present-day tradition of celebrating African American achievement in 1926. Today, throughout the United States, this tradition is celebrated by churches, schools, museums, government offices, corporations and others.

The 1991 rediscovery of the New York African Burial Ground continues to be a painful reminder of the lives and deaths of those interred in the cemetery, a reminder of enslavement in the North.

The necessity to teach and learn about this neglected part of New York's history is a chief goal of the Office of Public Education and Interpretation (OPEI). Fifty-two weeks a year, we take on the task of educating and informing the public-at-large about the

Continued on page 5

"As we celebrate African American History Month, let us commit ourselves to raising awareness and appreciation of African American history. Let us teach our children, and all Americans, to rise above brutality and bigotry and to be champions of liberty, human dignity and equality." George W. Bush (2001)

➔➔➔ LETTERS TO THE EDITOR ➔➔➔

Thanks from the State

On behalf of the Affirmative Action Office, I'd like to thank you for the copies of the New York African Burial Ground Project informational packets, as well as the Press Kit and Classroom Study Guide and Glossary that you sent in response to my January 18, 2001 request. These items are a welcome addition to our diversity information table as they provide a historical glimpse into our rich past.

I would like to remain on the mailing list to receive copies of the Update as they are published. Again, thank you for the information you sent.

Sincerely,
Trimelle C. Holmes, Admin. Aide
Affirmative Action Office
Office of the State Comptroller,
H. Carl McCall
Albany, New York

Responding to the "Daily News" Article of 2/5/01

The African Burial Ground Project has provided tangible and intangible results. The research of Dr. Michael Blakey has had a profound impact on the archaeological, descendant and broader communities. Many scholars have used the African Burial Ground Project as a topic to complete masters and doctoral dissertations. Others have aligned themselves with the Project in various capacities. It has enabled Historic Hudson Valley to begin a reinterpretation of their site at Philipsburg Manor from an African perspective. African Americans have begun to reclaim their burial grounds across the nation. Children have written stories, poems and essays in tribute to their African American forefathers. And, the concept of Slavery in the North is now studied passionately in universities.

You see, the African Burial Ground is one of the most important archaeological finds of the century. It is a new found energy within the descendant community. It is a vehicle to launch journeys of exploration and introspection. It has liberated us: one and all. Dr. Michael Blakey should be applauded for his tireless effort and commitment to the African Burial Ground Project.

Sincerely,
Phyllis C. Murray, Educator
P.S./M.S. 75X
Bronx, New York

The recent expose in the Daily News of the "\$21 Million Money Pit" by Bob Ingrassia is a "horse manure" game directed to the Afrikan Captive Survivor (ACS) masses who are ill-informed about the United States Government's political games. It is not really mind boggling that some ACS's

go for the same "bag of tricks" continuously. The therapeutic healing of the continued "Afrikan Horror Hell of a Cost" has never occurred for the enslaved Afrikan masses. This is a smoke screen to once again confuse Afrikan people "mired in woe" from conception—the truth about the ACS refugees' history on Manhattan Island must never be told. This entire media hype is geared totally to the Afrikans to distrust the alleged hand picked leaders of the Afrikan communities. This same ploy has been going on for centuries. Ask me or any of the other members of the Federal Steering Committee for the Afrikan Burial Ground who got the money. Who was in charge of the money being doled out? From the very beginning of this rediscovered Afrikan Burial Ground there has been turmoil. The usual strategy of pitting one Afrikan against the other Afrikan. Divide and conquer.

Manhattan Island which became known as New Amsterdam and later New York ran a close second to Charleston South Carolina's seaport for the biggest center of enslaved Afrikan captives (prisoners of war undeclared) taken out of the Afrikan continent and brought directly from Afrika to New York City. Manhattan Island's importation of Afrikan captives may possibly have surpassed Charleston, S.C. Further study will make that a more concrete fact.

Adunni Oshupa Tabasi
Afrikan Elder Community Activist
Staten Island, New York

Kudos for Historical Presentation

On February 15, Kahlil Shaw visited our campus to address my class-African Americans and the Law-on the Project's current status. His presentation was outstanding, professional and awe-inspiring. On a scale of 1-10, he was a 10+! To this extent, my students have requested a site tour. In fact emotions and curiosity were so intense, that I was hard pressed to find funding for such an excursion so late in the fiscal year. Indeed, the Dean of Social and Behavioral Sciences, William C. Jaynes, IV, has approved funding for this field trip. I hope that your organization can accommodate us accordingly. We hope that Mr. Shaw will be our tour guide. In addition, under separate cover, I will be forwarding requests for additional presentations by Mr. Shaw on our campus this semester.

Shawn R. Donaldson, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Sociology
The Richard Stockton College
of New Jersey

**OPEI welcomes letters from our
readers but reserves the right to
edit for length and clarity.**

Howard University Update: Update and Methodology of the Project's Historical Component

Edna G. Medford, Ph.D.

The historical team of the African Burial Ground Project recently completed its preliminary report. The team's diasporic approach involved the researching of repositories found not only in New York, but in Africa, the Caribbean, England, and the Netherlands as well. Hence, the report provides insight into the cultural, economic and political backgrounds of those Africans who were enslaved and brought to colonial New York and documents the physical conditions and legal constraints under which they and native born people of color lived and labored. Each group of historians -- Africanists, Caribbeanists, and Americanists -- researched social customs, patterns of labor, and physical environment and studied how they shaped Africans' responses to their enslavement.

The report is divided into five sections. The first outlines the purpose, goals and methodology employed by the historical team. It explains the rationale for a diasporic approach and outlines the themes that were the primary focus of the study.

Section Two emphasizes the political developments and trade relationships that facilitated European acquisition of certain ethnic groups for its transatlantic trade. The Africanists argue that European economic interests as well as African ones converged to supply the human commodities eagerly

sought in the labor-hungry colonies of the Americas, including New York. They also considered the cultural practices of seventeenth and eighteenth century Africans, especially as they relate to religious beliefs and burial customs. They argue that among the earliest unfree laborers in New York were Africans who had been exposed to Christianity as well as those who embraced traditional beliefs and practices indigenous to their regions.

Section Three, The West Indies, provides detailed information on a variety of factors shaping the experiences of enslaved Africans in the region that had a strong trade relationship with colonial New York. The Caribbeanists began their study with discussion of the trade in enslaved people to the islands, focusing on conditions of the middle passage and an assessment of numbers of ethnicities involved. They also provide insight into the conditions of labor, adaptations, and resistance to enslavement.

In Section Four, the Americanists focused their research on colonial New York itself, primarily during the eighteenth century, but the Dutch and early English periods are considered briefly as well. The researchers linked the demographic patterns in the city to both the nature of the provisional trade between the mainland colonies and the West Indies as well as to the particular labor needs of New

Yorkers. They argue further that New York's economy was such that enslaved people would have been exposed to arduous and hazardous labor regimens that possibly contributed to the skeletal stresses exhibited in the excavated remains.

Overall, the New York research points to lives shaped by the peculiar and varied exigencies of laboring in a rapidly growing urban environment where laws and customs attempted to keep enslaved people's desires for freedom in check. Yet, the research also suggests that these New York Africans found ways, through various non-confrontational as well as clandestine means and more directly by armed revolt and other forms of violence, to resist their enslavement. As slaveholders sought to objectify them, enslaved people affirmed their humanity through their daily interactions with each other by marrying and raising children, transmitting their cultural beliefs to them, and providing them with the tools to survive.

Section Five consists of a preliminary review of the possible physical impact that labor, living conditions and a diseased environment may have had on New York's African population. A more comprehensive assessment awaits the understanding that can be acquired through additional research.

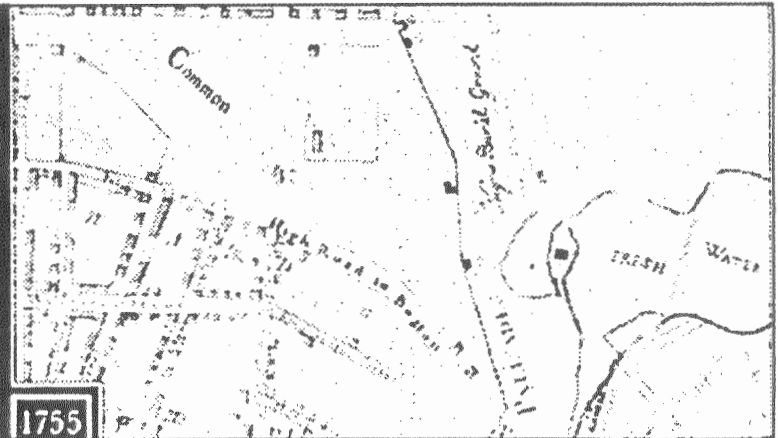
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Uncommon Ground:

From Pastures to Protest

Lee Baker, Ph.D.

IDI Construction Company, Inc. Researcher



Known for centuries as simply "the Commons," the history of this area symbolizes America's inherent contradiction that the ideals of democracy—liberty, freedom, and justice—have never been extended to all. New Amsterdam was the original name of New York City during the Dutch period (1623-1664). The small township, on the southern tip of Manhattan Island, was used as the administrative capital of a large Dutch colony called New Netherlands, which stretched from present-day Connecticut to Delaware. From the city's earliest years as a Dutch port, the African community has been a part of, and lived apart from, its residents. Similarly, the African Burial Ground has always been associated with the historic Commons, yet positioned on its periphery.

When New Amsterdam was established in the 1620s, the Dutch West India Company followed the model of agricultural villages in Holland, holding "in common" land that was not zoned for house lots or apportioned as farms. By 1660 the colonial government curbed the free range of animals and unfettered access to material resources across Manhattan. It created a pound for stray animals, hired a herdsman to control where animals grazed, and established the

Commons, which was a specific area where townspeople could collect firewood and engage in other subsistence activities. During the 1620s, this land was used as pasture and a source of such raw materials as wood, lime, clay, sods, and thatch (Epperson 1999:81).

The Commons has always been a site where various government entities have been in a tug-of-war with everyday people who claim it as their own public space. In many ways, the Commons has been a place where the symbols of government power and domination are pitted against the symbols of everyday people who used the Commons to celebrate, protest, commemorate, and demonstrate (Epperson 1999:81-83).

Although the Dutch instituted government control of the Commons with its formation, under British rule (beginning in 1664), governmental authorities increased their control and domination of the area. During the 1720s, public executions were meted out on the Commons, and in 1728 a gun powder house was erected, followed by the establishment of a poor house complex in 1735. The military regularly used the Commons as a parade ground, and a location to billet troops. In the 1740s, the city's leadership con-

structed a gun powder magazine, several blockhouses, and a palisade that cut across what is now the north end of City Hall Park. Serving as a defensive position for the northern part of the city, the landscape was dotted with barracks. By the mid 1700s, the Commons was firmly established as a site of government control and discipline with the "new Gaol" (jail) being constructed in 1757-59 and the Bridewell (an institution to incarcerate vagrants and debtors) in 1775. As colonial administrations transformed this communal pasture into a landscape of state power, the townspeople continued to use it for appropriating raw materials and engaging in public assembly and celebrations (Epperson 1999:81-86).

During the Revolutionary War, the Commons became the site where the Sons of Liberty staked five different "liberty poles" in dramatic bouts with the British Army, who would subsequently dismantle the symbols of defiance against the Crown. In 1770, the fifth and final liberty pole was defiantly stepped and raised. The pole stood more than forty-five feet high and held fast for six years. Topped with a gilt vane proclaiming "Liberty," it was a powerful symbol on the Commons for white colonists who staked their

claim for independence, liberty, and freedom from tyranny. It was on the Commons too where New Yorkers first heard the "Declaration of Independence." On July 9, 1776, with the massive liberty pole standing in the distance, George Washington and his newly formed Continental Army assembled on the Commons to hear those indomitable words: "We hold these truths to be self evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Harris, Howson, Bradley, 1993:5,13).¹ Africans had no rights. The same rights outlined in the Declaration of Independence would not be fully conveyed to African Americans in this United States until the United States Congress passed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, 198 years later.

While the sons of liberty defiantly exercised their presumptive rights to display the symbols of freedom, liberty, and independence on the Commons, the sons and daughters of Africa were denied the most basic of human rights—their freedom usurped, independence denied, and liberty snuffed out—by the very people protesting the King's rule. While many New Yorkers protested a tyrannical King who imposed stamps, taxes, and tariffs, others found comfort in ideas of loyalty to King and country, not to mention wealth generated by favorable trade relations with England. Whether revolutionary or loyalist, New Yorkers were engaged in a system of slavery that was far more tyrannical and oppressive than being subjected to the rule of King George III.

Like New Yorkers of European descent, Africans who lived in

Manhattan during colonial times claimed the Commons as their space, not just public but sacred space. Equally rich in symbols, the relationship between Africans in New York and the Commons is not a storied past of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, but a nightmarish tale from the crypt of death, slavery, and a fight for survival. Yet, from these nightmarish tales of violence, infant mortality, and a life cycle of disease, malnutrition, and physical trauma emerge chronicles of individual and collective resistance, resilience, spiritual strength, and loving care.

Efforts by the African descendants to reinter the ancestral remains are currently underway. Anthropologists and historians are busily using the evidence, literally embodied within the African Burial Ground, to write the history of the African experience in colonial New York. However, from its rediscovery in 1991 until today, the struggle to interpret and reinter the human and cultural remains of this sacred ground, claimed centuries ago, continues the centuries-old struggle—between government agencies and the people—over the use of the Commons. This struggle has prevented the administration of justice and the ability to make the pillars of our democracy stand for all Americans.



Footnote:

1. Incidentally New York, with its many loyalists to the Crown, was the only colony in the Continental Congress that "abstained" from approving that resolution of the "Declaration of Independence."

**Do you have questions about the
African Burial Ground?
Send inquiries to
NYABG@worldnet.att.net**

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Epperson, Terrence W. *The Contested Commons: Archaeologies of Race, Repression, and Resistance in New York City*. Leone, Mark P. and Potter B. Parker, eds. *Historical Archaeologies of Capitalism*. New York: Plenum Press, 1999; pp. 81-110.

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African American History Month Continued from Page 1

New York African historical presence and the African Burial Ground.

This year's February celebratory events included African Burial Ground landmark site tours, historical slide presentations, documentary film showings and gallery tours. Audiences who received these services included: Borough of Manhattan Community College, Strategic Conference on Racism, Manhattan Country School, Hunter College, The Greater Metropolitan Social Studies Conference, the N.Y. State Office of Disability Assistance, Manhattan International H.S., New York Botanical Gardens, Richard Stockton College, the U.S. General Services Administration (NYC), and the U.S. Dept. of Justice - Newark.

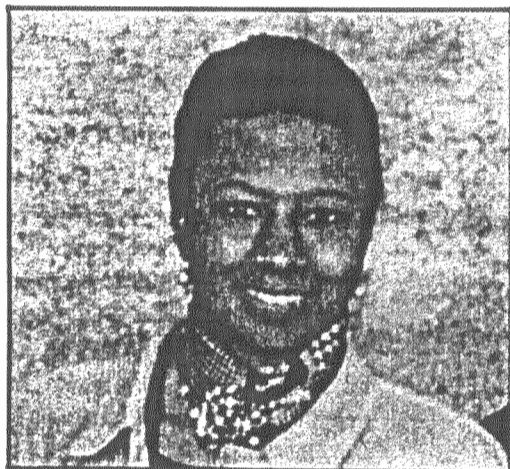
A "Ring Shout" musical performance by the Henry Warner Jazz Trio was the finale event held in the rotunda of 290 Broadway. The event was sponsored by the Metropolitan Transit Authority's (MTA) Arts for Transit/Music Under New York Program. This is the second year of the program, initiated as a project partnership by Peggy King Jorde (see page 6).





African Burial Ground Update

Compiled by Sherrill D. Wilson,
Tamara R. Jubilee-Shaw and
Donna Harden-Cole



□ **Peggy King-Jorde Former Project Executive for the Memorialization of the New York African Burial Ground.**

Peggy King-Jorde has served many roles during her long-term involvement with the NY African Burial Ground. In 1991, during the initial phase of the site's rediscovery, she served as a liaison between the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) and the David Dinkins' Administration. Her responsibilities included serving as a mayoral representative on the Mayor's Blue Ribbon African Burial Ground Committee between 1991-1992. From 1992-1994, Ms. King-Jorde served as the Executive Director of the GSA's Federal Steering Committee (FSC) chaired by the Schomburg Chief, Dr. Howard Dodson.

Beginning in 1996, Ms. King-Jorde took on the tasks of facilitating African Burial Ground Memorialization activities, as a consultant to the U.S. General Services Administration. These tasks included planning for the reburial of the 408 ancestral remains, and the internal Interpretive Center to be housed in 290 Broadway, and involvement with plans for the exterior, permanent memorial planned for the landmark African Burial Ground site. To meet those goals she held educational symposia in which 90 competitors and community members participated. She also initiated a number of public forums and interacted with advisory committees to assure that community input could be conveyed to design finalists.

Ms. King-Jorde's contributions and achievements in relation to the African Burial Ground Project are numerous. They include: soliciting a partnership with the National Conference of Black Mayors to help identify various African-American groups to participate in planned memorial activities and forming a partnership with the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA) in developing the "Ring Shout Performance Series" of concerts to be performed in 290 Broadway during African-American History Month.

Ms. King-Jorde's dedication, vision, and hard work for the African Burial Ground are very much appreciated. She will be missed. We wish her every good wish in what we know will be very successful future endeavors.

□ **Seneca Village Dedication.** Park officials, community members and representatives unveiled a new commemorative sign in dedication to the historic 19th century residential community of mostly African Americans known as Seneca Village on Saturday, February 10, 2001 at the 85th Street entrance of Central Park. The event continued at the New York Historical Society where several presentations were given to honor the historic site.

□ **OPEI's Newest Personnel Staff.** The four recent additions to OPEI's staff, include a new intern and three public educators, who bring a wealth of diversity and experience to the Project. **Nonet Dapul**, a Public Educator for OPEI, was a former Counselor with the Philippine Mission to the United Nations in New York. She holds a B.A. degree in linguistics from the University of the Philippines. She was doing graduate work in Asian studies with a focus on Japan when she passed the Philippine Foreign Service Exams. She trained at Philippine, Japanese and Australian Foreign Service Institutes and also served at a post in Tokyo in the mid 1980's.

While trained essentially as a political officer, she appreciates how culture and history shape decisions made by present-day societies. "Coming from a poor country with a long history of colonization, I understand the necessity of a people confronting the past to improve their present and future." Nonet Dapul is married to Alan Webberman and has a nine-year old daughter named Sarah.

Russell Albans joined the OPEI staff as a Public Educator in January of 2001. He is originally from Los Angeles, California where he worked as an investment broker and administrative assistant.

OPEI's New Staff Members:

Seated on the left is LaToya Williams, currently serving as an office intern. Standing behind her is Elise Alexander (l) and Russell Albans (r). Nonet Dapul is seated on the right.

Photo credit:
Tamara R. Jubilee
Shaw



**2001 CALENDAR OF
OPEI EVENTS ***

April 21st
Volunteer Training

May 19th
Open House

June 23rd
Film Festival

July 21st
Summer Symposium

August 18th
Open to the Public

Sept. 22nd
Film Festival

October 20th
Volunteer Training

November 17th
Fall Symposium

December 29th
Kwanzaa Film Festival

* Reservations are needed for all events. Events are subject to change or cancellation. Please call to confirm time and locations @ (212) 432-5707.

OPEI's New Staff Members (cont.)

In 1995 he moved to Oakland and soon left the investment business to pursue a career as a visual artist. In 1998 he traveled to Zimbabwe, Africa, where he learned stone sculpture under Nicolas Mukomberanwa. He has worked teaching art to children of various ages through non-profit organizations and in the public schools.

In the summer of 2000 he arrived in New York where he continues his work in the arts and with the African Burial Ground Project. His priority is simply to contribute to uplifting people, especially our youth.

Elise Alexander is a new Public Educator at OPEI. She has received a BA in anthropology from the University of New Hampshire and a MA in anthropology from the University of Pittsburgh. Though a cultural anthropologist at heart, she has worked on a number of archaeological digs in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region.

As an intern at Strawberry Banke Museum, she helped to create an African-American Heritage Walking Tour of Portsmouth, New Hampshire. She has also worked as a volunteer at the Hearst Museum of Anthropology at The University of California at Berkeley and as an intern in the education department at the Carnegie Museum of Natural History in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. A recent arrival to New York, Elise feels very fortunate to be a part of such a historically important and community driven project.

LaToya Williams is a 1997 graduate of Rockland Community College with an Associates Degree in communications and media arts. Since 1998, she has been pursuing a Bachelor of Arts Degree in anthropology at the City College of New York. Upon graduation this fall, Ms. Williams plans to pursue a master's degree in urban anthropology. She is currently seeking student travel opportunities that will support her academic endeavors.

Ms. Williams was recommended for the OPEI internship program by her anthropology professor Dr. Diana Wall. She plans to utilize her time as an intern at the African Burial Ground Project to increase her knowledge and understanding about this important sector of New York history.



**ARE YOU ON OUR
MAILING LIST?**

Please submit your name
and/or corrections to OPEI at
6 World Trade Center,
Rm. 239
New York, New York 10048
Tel. (212) 432-5707
Fax (212) 432-5920

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION UPDATE

Ronald Law
Associate Regional Administrator
African Burial Ground Project

Dear Friends:

The rediscovery of New York City's colonial-era African Burial Ground in lower Manhattan is widely recognized as one of this nation's most significant archaeological finds of the 20th century. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) has been the Federal agency responsible for the many aspects of the African Burial Ground Project (ABG) in the ten years since that rediscovery. During this time, GSA has funded upwards of \$21.6 million dollars on ABG-related work and anticipates spending additional sums to bring this significant project to completion.

To further advance this important project, GSA has recently hired a new consultant to take on the responsibilities and activities of the Office of the Exterior Memorial and the Reinterment Ceremony. This consultant will work on establishing the earliest possible date for reinterment, creating a ceremony for reinterment, and assisting with the selection of an Exterior Memorial. Additionally, OPEI will now have an Associate Director of Public Relations. These two new consultants began work in February.

There are, however, several outstanding matters that must be addressed for the successful completion of this project. Foremost among these is to establish the earliest possible date for reinterment. In addition, there are contractual matters with Howard University that must be resolved,

the status of the scientific research on the artifacts to be determined, and the Interpretive Center to complete. A resolution of these issues will bring GSA's African Burial Ground Project closer to fruition.

The Descendant Community has expressed major concerns and a significant desire for the immediate reinterment of the 408 human remains that are still in the custody of Howard University. The continued delay and uncertainty in establishing a date for the reinterment ceremony has exasperated the Descendants. In order to comply with the Descendant Community's wishes, however, the following must be determined:

- 1) When will Howard University complete the research of the remaining 400 outstanding artifacts?
- 2) What is the best possible manner for engaging the Descendant Community and community at large in planning the reinterment ceremony?
- 3) Addressing the many complex legal and engineering considerations.

As some of you may be aware, last year, January 2000, Howard University declined an extension of its contract with GSA due to funding issues. As a result, the scientific research came to an abrupt halt. Unfortunately, the prolonged impact of this contractual dispute extends to and has an adverse effect on other aspects of the ABG project.

First and foremost are the deliverables of scientific reports and findings from Dr. Michael Blakey, for which the University has already received close to \$4.5 million. This scientific information is required by IDI Construction, in order for them to complete its task of designing and building the Interpretive Center at 290 Broadway. In addition, Howard University must clarify the time frame for completing the research of the remaining 400 outstanding artifacts. Without this information it becomes difficult for GSA to determine a schedule for reintering the human remains.

GSA is in contact with Howard University to resolve the contractual dispute so that the scientific research may move forward to completion and thereby facilitate completion of other important aspects of this project. Also, engaging the Descendant Community in the reinterment ceremony will be a top priority for the new consultant in the Office of the Exterior Memorial. Finally, GSA is committed to establishing regular meetings with the Descendant Community to ensure that interested and concerned individuals are kept apprised of developments with this project.



Ashanti cast bronze lid of
gold dust box, Ghana

COMMUNITY VOICES



Compiled by Kahlil Shaw

For two consecutive years, community activists from the organization, The Committee of the Descendants of the Afrikan Ancestral Burial Ground, have protested during Kwanzaa Week at the landmark African Burial Ground site in lower Manhattan. The focus of the protest has been the number of delays involved with reburial of the ancestral remains excavated by the General Services Administration prior to building construction between 1991-1992. *What are your thoughts regarding the importance of reburial?*

Reverend Carolyn Holloway
Pastor, DeWitt Reformed Church, RCA

In response to your question regarding the reburial, I would not want my immediate ancestors' remains to be rooted out of the ground from which they currently lie. Neither do I wish for the remains of my past ancestors to be denied the dignity of being reburied as soon as possible. It is my desire to see them rest in the pride and dignity they deserve. Why should they be denied respect in life and death? Our ancestors have the right to "Rest in Peace" as their remains return to the dust.

Pat Willis, OPEI Volunteer/Community Activist

In trying to make the most convincing case of the reburial of the bones of our ancestors, let us for a moment move away from the obvious emotional arguments that we might have, because of our natural attachments to the subject. Over the centuries thousands of archaeological remains have been unearthed. The condition of the uncovered remains reveal that the worth of the buried person does not dissipate after death. There is much evidence of the sacred care given to honor the passing of each individual. Among several descriptions the dictionary lists the word "grave" as being an excavation in the earth, the burial of a dead body or the abode of the dead. Nowhere does the information allude to legitimate burials being made or sustained in rotting newspapers or cardboard boxes. In Judeo-Christian religion or philosophical practices the sacredness of life is enshrined, entombed, worshiped and acknowledged with epitaph, prayer, libation and other mournful remembrances.

Lying in an unmarked grave is considered blasphemous and detrimental to the very soul of the departed.

Enslaved people, although relegated to the position of non-person, did in fact believe in transcendence that started with proper burials. Being relegated to a sloppy grave site does not dampen the need to respect the dead. There is a belief that the journey to the afterlife, with the appliance of appropriate rituals, is facilitated by those left behind. However, these long dead, unnamed personalities have more to do than just depend on us to be keepers of tradition. They are relying on us to demand a proper reburial in a proper place. Let us remove them from the rotten paper, the damp room and the cardboard boxes, and place them at respectful rest.

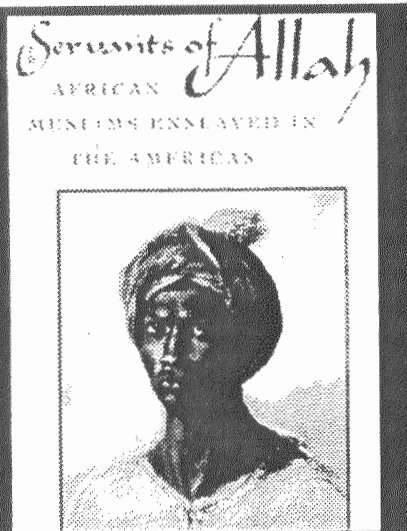
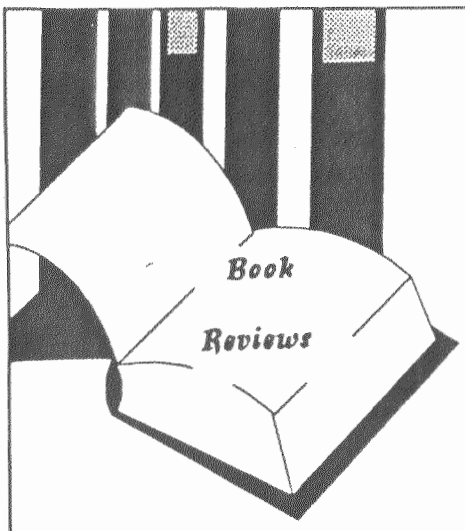
**Dr. Joe Jackson, Retired Professor,
Lehman College and Community Activist**

The reburial of the remains has significance to society in general. Of course it's important for us (African Americans) to know our history. There's a tremendous amount to be gained from handling the remains in a respectful manner. To exploit, delay, and deny the respect these remains are entitled to is counterproductive to anything that is meaningful, sensitive, and humane in our society. It's a violation of human rights and this delay has certainly fallen in the hands of the politicians. To demonstrate during Kwanzaa perhaps is not enough. Maybe demonstrations should take on another form. Perhaps some of the politicians who are key in making decisions should be singled out and dealt with from the standpoint of seeing to it that they're no longer in office. What I'm suggesting is that the demonstrations take on another form in addition to Kwanzaa week. Kwanzaa represents a philosophy of principles that should be in operation 12 months of the year and maybe some of those principles should be applied to those politicians who have worked against the original plans to bury the remains with proper respect.

People can organize in their own areas or districts to make sure that those politicians are not voted for. Use the power of the ballot to keep them out of office. Just like we target a commodity that supports a television show that makes negative comments about us, we should target these individuals who are politicians and see to it that they're returned home unemployed!

After they finish doing the scientific study they should have a proper burial right away. What's the point of keeping them above ground? Return them to their proper place. They should be returned here and in Africa and give them the honor and respect that they should have. We are talking about people who are really the originals of this country who have laid the foundation for what we are enjoying now.





"shout" which describes a "religious ring dance in which the participants continue to perform until they are exhausted," and the Arabic word *shaut* (pronounced the same way as shout) meaning "to move around the *Kaaba* until exhausted." Further evidence of the retention of Islamic practices were found in the naming process of enslaved Africans who insisted on being allowed to identify themselves with names such as "Ibrahim" or "Rahman," "Fatima" and "Amina." It has been documented that some enslaved Muslims ate only "*halal*" meats and refused to eat "swine."

Book Title: *Servants of Allah: African Muslims Enslaved in the Americas*

Author: Sylviane A. Diouf

Publisher: N.Y. Univ. Press

Reviewer: Tamara R. Jubilee-Shaw

Many believe that African Islamic history in America began with Malcolm X and the Nation of Islam when on the contrary, African Muslims were among "the very first and the very last" to be transported to the Americas during the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade. According to Diouf, the African-American Islamic story actually begins in Africa with the dislocation of the Jolof Empire, the political-religious wars in the Sudan, Northern Dahomey and along the Gold Coast.

Many writers over the years have written about individual African Muslims in American history but have not written enough about how orthodox Islam has continued to survive in certain religious traditions and artistic interpretations of people of African descent. *Servants of Allah* exposes how African Muslims had to overcome their "double minority" status (as Afri-

cans and as Muslims) in the free African colonial community and as enslaved persons. Literacy was also very high within these African Muslim communities. Apparently they kept on reading the Koran, writing in Arabic and opened educational institutions. Diouf discovered that literacy in general distinguished enslaved Africans from one another in terms of how they were received by enslavers and traders. In some instances, Islam became a key to freedom, played a major part in the most elaborate slavery period uprisings and was the motivating force that sent freed men and women back to Africa. Diouf takes a look at historical archives including newspaper articles, plantation records, traveler diaries, biographies and autobiographies. Some of the countries in Africa with large Muslim populations which were victimized by slavery included Senegal, Mali, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone.

In *Servants of Allah*, Diouf refers to specific similarities between Islamic traditions and practices and African-American customs and traditions which were documented during the enslavement period in America. For example, a comparison is made between the word

The wearing of Islamic style or modest dress by enslaved Africans has also been documented. One enslaved African woman was said to always "weah a loose wite clawt da she trow obuh uh head lak veil an it hang loose on uh shoulduh." An enslaved African man reportedly wore "his head tied up in a wite clawt."

With his book, Diouf examines the Islamic legacy in African-American history in America and searches for an explanation as to why this history has disappeared from collective memory and why it's been largely neglected by scholarly research. *Servants of Allah* can be described as a successful history of strength, resilience, courage, pride and dignity.

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IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF UPDATE:

- ▼ Media Representations
(Part 3 of 5)
- ▼ GSA Project Update

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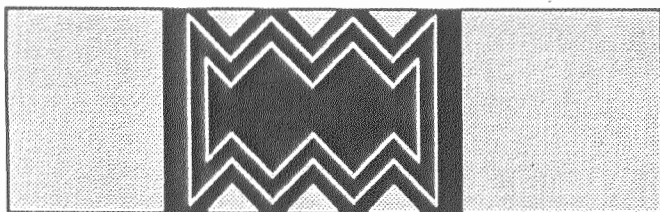
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